

**REMARKS**

Applicants' undersigned attorney thanks the Examiner for her comments. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this patent application, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks. Currently, Claims 18, 22-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-64, 66-68, 71, 72, 75, and 76 are pending.

**Amendments to the Specification**

The specification has been amended at page 16, line 2, to include a sentence stating that the web suitably has a density between about 0.1 g/cc and about 0.5 g/cc. Support for this sentence is provided in original Claims 17, 34, 51, and 68.

The specification has been amended at page 17, line 9, and at page 25, lines 2-3, by replacing an attorney docket number with the number of the issued U.S. Patent that corresponds with the attorney docket number. The specification has also been amended at page 24, line 21 - page 25, line 1, by replacing an application serial number with the number of the issued U.S. Patent.

No new matter has been added by this Amendment.

**Amendments to the Claims**

Claims 18, 22-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-64, 66-68, 71, 72, 75, and 76 have been examined with no claims being allowed.

Independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 have been amended to remove the limitations of the composite absorbent web having an edge compression of below about 1.2 g/gsm, a saturated capacity of above about 18 g/g, and a wet tensile strength of greater than about 0.5 g/gsm/in, and to instead include the limitations of the composite absorbent web having an edge compression of about 0.29 g/gsm or less, a saturated capacity of about 20.4 g/g or greater, and a wet tensile strength of about 1.16 g/gsm/in or greater. Support for these limitations is provided in the table on page 19, as well as in the text on page 19, lines 10-12, in which Applicants have conveyed that lower edge compression, greater saturated capacity, and greater wet tensile strength are beneficial in the invention.

Independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 have been further amended to include the limitation of the composite absorbent web having a density between about 0.1 g/cc and about 0.5 g/cc. Support for this limitation is provided in original Claims 17, 34, 51, and 68. Since these limitations have been incorporated into the independent claims, Applicants respectfully request the cancellation of dependent Claims 34 and 68.

No new matter has been added by this Amendment. No additional fee is due for this Amendment because the number of independent claims remains unchanged and the total number of claims has been reduced.

#### **Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112**

The rejection of Claims 18, 22-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-64, 66-68, 71, 72, 75, and 76 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement is respectfully traversed.

Applicants have amended independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 by removing the limitations of the composite absorbent web having an edge compression of below about 1.2 g/gsm, a saturated capacity of above about 18 g/g, and a wet tensile strength of greater than about 0.5 g/gsm/in.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

#### **Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103**

##### **A. Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook**

The rejection of Claims 18, 22-25, 29-30, 32-34, 52, 56, 58-59, 63-64, 66-68, 80-82, and 86-88 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Assarsson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 3,901,236, hereinafter "Assarsson") in view of Dodge II et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,994,615, hereinafter "Dodge") and Cook et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,562,746, hereinafter "Cook") is respectfully traversed, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks.

Independent Claims 18, 30, 52, and 64 each recite a composite absorbent web comprising a homogenous mixture of binder and particles of

particulate-coated superabsorbent material, with the web having a relatively low edge compression (i.e., greater flexibility), a relatively high saturated capacity, and a relatively high wet tensile strength. Data is presented in the table on page 19 of the specification showing the improved saturated capacity and edge compression in a composite including coated SAP and a binder (sample 1) in accordance with the invention versus a sample including non-coated superabsorbent particles (sample 3) and a sample having non-coated superabsorbent particles and no binder (sample 2).

Assarsson discloses an airlaid material that includes coated superabsorbent particles (SAP) without any binder. The coated SAP is included to *enhance the rate of absorption*. Because the material lacks a binder, the material lacks wet integrity, i.e., wet tensile strength. The combined benefit of enhanced capacity, flexibility, and strength provided by the webs of the present invention are not anticipated by Assarsson.

Dodge discloses a surge material that may be assisted by a multifunctional material. The multifunctional material serves as a buffer between surge and distribution layers and includes non-coated, *slow-rate* SAP, pulp, and a binder. The multifunctional material in Dodge is analogous to sample 3 in the table on page 19 of the present application. The considerable differences in saturated capacity and edge compression between Applicants' claimed invention and the material in sample 3 are illustrated in the table on page 19.

There is no suggestion to employ the binder from the multifunctional material of Dodge in the fast-absorbing airlaid material of Assarsson because these materials provide contradictory functions and, consequently, there is no suggestion or motivation to interchange their individual components. Furthermore, the SAP in Dodge is "slow rate" SAP, which further slows the rate of absorption, thus further teaching away from any interchangeability between the individual components in the fast-absorbing airlaid material of Assarsson and the slow-absorbing multifunctional material in Dodge.

Thus, contrary to the Examiner's assertion that it would have been obvious to have employed the binders of Dodge in the airlaid web of Assarsson motivated by the expectation that the binders would enhance the absorbency and

strength of the Assarsson absorbent web, it is unlikely that anyone skilled in the art would extract any component of the Dodge material to enhance the absorbency of the Assarsson material. More particularly, the Dodge material is less absorbent than the Assarsson material. The Dodge multifunctional absorbent material is designed to assist the surge material by absorbing an insult and allowing the insult to pass through to a distribution layer. Since the Assarsson absorbent web is designed to absorb and retain an insult, it is unlikely that a person skilled in the art would extract any component from the less absorbent web of Dodge to insert into the Assarsson web with the expectation of enhancing the absorbency of the Assarsson web. It is also unlikely that a person skilled in the art would consider applying the binders of Dodge to the Assarsson web with the expectation of reducing the edge compression (i.e., increasing the flexibility), since binders typically increase edge compression, or reduce flexibility. For instance, the example on page 19 shows the effect of adding a binder to a web. More particularly, Sample 3 is essentially the same as Sample 2, but with a binder included in Sample 3. As seen in the table on page 19, Sample 3 (with a binder) has a considerably greater edge compression than Sample 2 (no binder).

Cook discloses a combination of fibers and a high concentration of SAP in an absorbent structure. A polyvalent cation-containing compound on the fibers makes the high concentration of SAP feasible. There is no suggestion in Cook that would lead a person skilled in the art to modify the materials in either Assarsson and/or Dodge to achieve a composite absorbent web having exceptional flexibility and saturated capacity, particularly by combining a binder with particulate-coated superabsorbent material. More particularly, the composite absorbent webs of Applicants' claimed invention have a combination of properties not achieved by, or even recognized as being desirable by, Assarsson, Dodge, and Cook, alone or in any combination.

For at least the reasons given above, Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook fail to disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

**B. Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook and further in view of Radwanski**

The rejection of Claims 26-28, 60-62, 71-72, and 75-76 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook as applied to the claims above, and further in view of Radwanski et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,939,016, hereinafter "Radwanski") is respectfully traversed, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks.

Radwanski is directed to a hydraulically entangled nonwoven elastomeric web. In view of the disparate subject matter in Radwanski compared to the other cited references, there is no suggestion or motivation for a person skilled in the art to combine the teachings of the Radwanski reference with the teachings of Assarsson, Dodge, and/or Cook. Although Radwanski discloses meltblown elastomeric fibers incorporated in airlaid webs, and the addition of layers to a web, Radwanski fails to overcome the deficiencies of Assarsson, Dodge, and Cook. More particularly, none of these four references, alone or in any combination, disclose or suggest incorporating meltblown and/or elastomeric fibers into an absorbent web that includes a binder and a coated SAP, or into any web having the combined flexibility, saturated capacity, and wet tensile strength of Applicants' recited web.

As explained above, a combination of the coated SAP in Assarsson with the binder in Dodge would be repugnant to the intended purposes of the materials in these references. Furthermore, neither Cook nor Radwanski provide any suggestion or motivation to combine a binder and coated SAP, nor any suggestion or motivation to strive for the flexibility, saturated capacity, and wet tensile strength of Applicants' recited web, either through routine experimentation or direct application.

For at least the reasons given above, Applicants respectfully submit that the teachings of Assarsson in view of Dodge and Cook as applied to the claims above, and further in view of Radwanski, fail to disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

**Conclusion**

Applicants intend to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action. If the Examiner detects any issue which the Examiner believes Applicants have not addressed in this response, Applicants' undersigned attorney requests a telephone interview with the Examiner.

Applicants sincerely believe that this Patent Application is now in condition for allowance and, thus, respectfully request early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie I. Rauch", is written over the printed name.

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